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April 22, 1999

Donna Shalala
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Humane Farming Association vs. Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Shalala:

I urge you to immediately act on the Humane Farming Association petition to initiate a nationwide program to document the incidence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in humans.

I have been following the BSE issue since it was first announced in Britain. After years of stonewalling, the British government finally took measures to protect its citizenry. The U.S. government first instituted a "voluntary" ban on feeding possibly infected mammals to other mammals intended for human consumption. Only after irrefutable evidence that this practice had caused over a dozen deaths in Britain did the U.S. government require the meat industry to restrict such feedings. These restrictions, however, are still inadequate: still permitted are feeding of pigs to pigs, pigs to cattle, and cattle blood products to calves. Although claims have been made that "no U.S. cattle have ever been found with BSE", very little testing has been done of the most likely infected animals, downer cows (cows that die without apparent cause).

Even if these feeding practices were stopped today, great damage may have already been done. New-variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease has an incubation period of many years, during which the patient is asymptomatic and infectious.

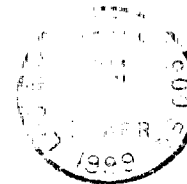
HFA's petition to the CDC demands that nvCJD be treated like any other public health threat, with a baseline investigation and the establishment of state monitoring and a national registry. The time to determine the extent of this disease in the U.S. is now.

Yours truly,

Danila B. Oder C-83
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